

A Guide for  
Preventing  
Problems  
with Bears in  
Asheville, NC

Help Make Asheville a

# BEAR SMART COMMUNITY



City of Asheville  
P.O. Box 7148  
Asheville, NC 28802



## **Make Asheville a Bear Smart community!**

- ✓ Do not ever feed bears. ✓ Store garbage inside buildings.
- ✓ Do not leave pet foods out overnight. ✓ Bring bird feeders in at night.

Dear Asheville Resident,

Black bears are an important part of North Carolina's fauna. As people move into bear country in increasing numbers, it is ultimately human attitudes toward bears that will determine whether bears will continue to exist in our state.

Unfortunately, bears are viewed either as dangerous animals or cuddly pets. Avoid these extreme views, and show a healthy respect for this magnificent forest animal. Please review the enclosed information to help ensure that bears and people can live together.

As a resident in bear country, you can avoid attracting bears and prevent conflicts from occurring. Thank you for taking the time to review this information and for sharing it with your neighbors.

Sincerely,  
Brenda Sears  
Asheville Police Department Animal Services Division  
(828) 259-5872

### Are bears dangerous?

Most injuries associated with bear-human encounters result from people feeding bears or from bears feeding on human food sources. Simply observing a bear in your yard is not cause for alarm. **Make sure all garbage is stored or handled as described in this brochure.** Do not provoke or feed the bear. Request that others in your area follow the same procedures.

### What attracts bears into a residential area?

Bears will naturally investigate food odors and are attracted to garbage, bird seed and suet, pet foods, compost piles and grease on barbecue grills. Once a bear receives one of these "rewards," he or she may return to the same area several times (even after food is removed) to search for similar foods. Some bears become fairly tolerant of humans in these situations and appear tame. Remember, bears are wild animals and are unpredictable. Therefore, the solution to most bear problems is to remove the source of attraction before conflicts occur.

### Most bear problems are temporary.

Most bear problems are temporary and usually occur in the spring and summer. Between the time bears emerge from their dens and summer foods such as berries ripen, natural food supplies are low and

not very nutritious. This causes bears to travel more in search of food. Also, breeding season occurs from June to August, and male bears tend to roam more in search of mates. During this same time period, young males are dispersing to new territories and often wander into residential areas. Usually dispersing bears remain in an area less than two weeks. By keeping food away from bears during those times of increased travel, many problems may be avoided.

### Why not just move problem bears?

There are several reasons why moving problem bears is not an option. Among those reasons, first and foremost, moving a bear does not address the problem. If the problem is not fixed, other bears will move in to take advantage of the food source or the bear that was moved may return to become a problem once more. Second, there are no longer areas that are sufficiently remote to ensure that a relocated bear would not encounter other residences and possibly become a nuisance there.

### How are bear problems best handled?

There are many things that can be done to minimize or eliminate the chances that bears will get into garbage or become a problem in an area. Implement these solutions as soon as the problem starts - or before problems occur.

❑ **Do not feed bears under any circumstances.** Do not allow bears access to garbage or other food. Store garbage inside buildings or other inaccessible areas. Do not leave garbage out overnight. Keep all garbage sites clean. Do not leave pet foods out overnight. If bird feeders have been visited by a bear, stop feeding birds for 1 to 2 weeks, and begin taking feeders in at night.

❑ **Repellents.** There are no repellents that are registered for use on bears.

❑ **Frightening or scaring the bear.** Shouting, clapping, blasting a car horn or motion-sensitive lights may scare off a bear temporarily. Do not taunt a bear if it fails to respond to your efforts to frighten it. These methods are only temporary solutions.

❑ **Crowd Control.** Sometimes when a bear is sighted, crowds may gather. This seemingly harmless situation can be aggravated as the crowd grows. People can cause bears to display unpredictable behavior.